

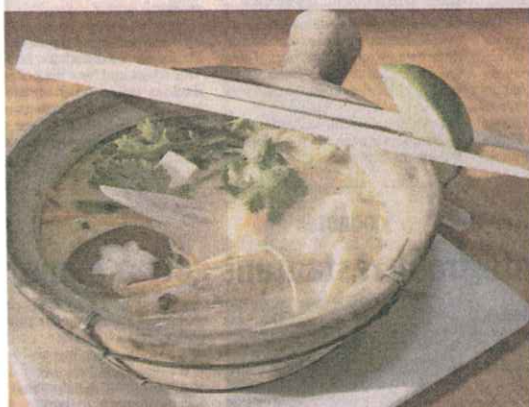
# First rate vs. fifth taste

The  
**A**  
list

About this series

Since The Line began rating restaurants with letter grades in December, 2001, The Journal News chief restaurant critic, Judith Hausman, has given restaurants in Westchester, Putnam and Rockland six "A"s and 17 "A-" grades. During August, while Hausman is on vacation, we will highlight those restaurants. To read full reviews of all 23 restaurants, visit [www.thejournalnews.com/the\\_line/foodline](http://www.thejournalnews.com/the_line/foodline).

The "A" restaurants featured today couldn't be more different in style: Umami Cafe in Croton-on-Hudson has wood tables and Ikea silverware; Equus in Tarrytown has tablecloths and plates with domed silver covers. But they both do something very right — food. Umami Cafe specializes in what the Japanese call "the fifth taste," a sensation of satisfaction from what's in your mouth. That's why truffled mac-and-cheese fits in so well there. Don't expect a leisurely, fine-dining experience at Umami, though. It's a place you can take the kids but eat some grown-up food, too. Equus, though, is a special-occasion, wear-your-best-suit kind of place. (And jackets are required for dinner. No sneakers, either.) Chef David Haviland is serv- contemporary cuisine that pays homage to French roots with dishes like Dover sole and escargots. — Elizabeth Johnson



Tom Nycz/The Journal News

Fifth taste' flavors of coconut lime soup at Umami will make you want to pick up the bowl and drink the last drop of broth.



Journal News file photo

Dining at Equus means no detail will go unnoticed, from bread to the candlelight to dessert.

## Umami Cafe

325 Riverside Ave., Croton-on-Hudson.  
914-271-5555.

Appetizers: \$5 to \$10; entrees: \$12 to \$16. Recommended Peking duck quesadilla, Evil Jungle truffled mac-and-cheese. **Who goes?** The of all ages. **Hours** 5:30 to 10 p.m. Sundays rdsays; until 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. **Cards** All major. **Reservations** None taken; fills **noise level** Moderate to noisy. **Parking** Adjacent **accessibility** Ramped entrance; accessible oms. **Published** 9.19.02.

## bottomline A

**Reviewer Judith Hausman wrote:** Parmesan and truffles, miso and just-picked ripe tomatoes, fole gras and potato chips are all rich in umami. It's satisfying, enhancing, robust: it's whatever makes you say "mmmm" and ask for more. And you do that at Umami Cafe, which is terrific fun. The food and wine are intelligent, personal and adventuresome; the attitude is casual but not sloppy. That (umami) must have its mojo working, because you want to go back and try what you couldn't, plus new appealing dishes will surely await.

## Equus

400 Benedict Ave., Tarrytown.  
914-631-3646.

**Price** Four-course prix-fixe, \$72. **Recommended** The chef has changed since this review, but former dishes include tuna tartare, medallion of venison, Castle chocolate cake. **Who goes?** Romantic couples, corporate groups, special occasion parties. **Hours** Breakfast 7-10:30 a.m. daily; Lunch: Noon-2:30 p.m. daily; Afternoon tea: 2:30-5 p.m. daily. Dinner: 6-10 p.m. Sundays to Fridays, 5:30 to 10 p.m. Saturdays. **Credit cards** All major. **Reservations** Required. **Noise level** Quiet to moderate. **Parking** Valet parking. **Accessibility** A fold-down lift makes the dining room

entrance accessible and restrooms are accessible. **Published** 3.20.03.

## bottomline A

**Reviewer Judith Hausman wrote:** The atmosphere at Equus is the definition of baronial: a carved wooden staircase, roaring blazes in each room, tapestries and stone. Try a cocktail at the clubby bar tucked into the foyer, then sit one of three smaller rooms where the space doesn't feel so cavernous. You can show off with a caviar supplement or a small extra fee for the cheese selection, but the very sumptuous dinner here is not a rose that needs gilding.

## shortlist

### Finch Tavern

592 Route 22, Croton Falls.  
914-277-4580.

Tavern in name only, the décor is sedate chic: cushy banquettes, khaki walls and elegant mural of horses across a far wall references the local horsey set. Finch m is certainly gracious and inviting in sphere and with its best-of-American, gnal and regional menu. **Published** 10.24.02.

## bottomline A-

### Willett House

20 Willett Ave., Port Chester.  
914-939-7500.

The Willett House doesn't miss a trick in the steakhouse tradition. Spacious and attractive, it feels like a place where deals are made over big red wines, sharp knives and fine beef. Both the rapacious and the low-carb dieter will eat well here. The beef, and all its accompaniments, is here but so is some mighty impressive vino. **Published** 11.13.03.

## bottomline A-

### Crabtree's Kittle House

11 Kittle Road, Chappaqua.  
914-666-8044.

The restaurant is cozy and welcoming, but also anticipatory and special occasion. Cuisine here has much the same double appeal. The 60,000-bottle wine list, cheese selections and efforts to include regional products are all ambitious, the service is excellent, and the prices are studiously fair. A new chef, Jeremy Smollar, is putting his own touches on the menu. **Published** 12.18.03.

## bottomline A-

### Buffet de la Gare

155 Southside Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson.  
914-478-1671.

It's only the glimpses of the Hudson and the Palisades from the front window that remind you that you are not in France, because the tin ceilings, wall sconces, menu and gracious, bilingual service would convince you that you've been transported. Buffet de la Gare is the real thing. It's a French experience without the plane ticket and with warmth and family pride. **Published** 1.8.04.

## bottomline A-

### Pacifico

316 Boston Post Road, Port Chester.  
914-937-1610.

Pacifico's stylish, original seafood reminds us of Latin America. Here we can taste from her many environments: islands, mountains, coast, plains and jungle. Splashed with mango and papaya colors, the dining room has a swirling turquoise ceiling and a mermaid mural graces the waiting area next to the bar. Expect a buzz, not a sedate dinner, at Pacifico, where a dinner sheds sparkling new light on Latino cuisine. **Published** 2.26.04.

## bottomline A-